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ABSTRACT

THIS REPORT IS CONCERNED WITH THE USE OF THE EDWARDS PERSONAL PREFERENCE SCHEDULE (EPPS), IN MARRIAGE COUNSELING. A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE EPPS IS GIVEN, NOTING ITS QUICKNESS AND EASY ADMINISTRATION. THE 15 PERSONALITY VARIABLES ARE PRESENTED WITH A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE MEANING OF EACH ITEM. METHODS OF INTERPRETATION ARE PRESENTED INCLUDING: (1) THERE IS NO "GOOD" OR "BAD" SCORE, (2) BOTH THE SOCIALLY DESIRABLE AND UNDESIRABLE CONTEXT OF EACH TERM IS EXPLAINED, (3) CONSIDERATION OF BOTH EXTREMES OF EACH HIGH AND LOW VARIABLES, AND (4) INVOLVING THE COUNSELEE IN EXPLAINING HIS IDEAS OF THE RESULTS. ONLY THE INDIVIDUAL KNOWS THE TRUE MEANING OF HIS SCORE. USE OF THE EPPS IN PREMARITAL COUNSELING IS ILLUSTRATED IN ONE EXAMPLE. SOMETIMES JUST PINPOINTING THE DIFFERENCES IN THREE BASIC PERSONALITY NEEDS; AFFILIATION, SUCCORANCE, AND NURTURANCE; MAKES FOR INCREASED UNDERSTANDING AND TOLERANCE. (KJ)

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THE USE OF THE EDWARDS PERSONAL PREFERENCE SCHEDULE IN PRE-MARITAL & MARRIAGE COUNSELING

(Paper presented at the National Council on Family Relations Annual Convention, Washington, D.C., October 24, 1969)

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USE OF THE EPPS IN PRE-MARITAL AND MARRIAGE COUNSELING

There is at present in the profession of counseling some disagreement over the general utility of tests and appraisal instruments. At one end of the spectrum we have counselors who would seem to belong to the old "test'em and tell'em" school, who have great faith in most psychological measuring instruments and use them extensively. At the other extreme are those counselors who scorn the use of all so-called "pencil and paper" tests, and rely mainly on intuition and listening as counseling aids. While age and experience may have some relation to one's position on this scale, with younger and less experienced counselors naturally being more dependent on extrinsic resources, this does not always hold true. Other factors may be the counselor's orientation in regard to the "directive-non-directive" dichotomy, which was at its peak several years ago and fortunately now seems to have abated somewhat, and to the old "science-art" argument which is still heard regarding all professional activity having mainly to do with people, such as teaching, nursing, psychotherapy, counseling, etc.

Most counselors, knowing that counseling is both a science and an art, would probably fall comfortably between the two extremes.

Marriage counselors, those specialists within a specialty, are probably even more pragmatic and eclectic than counselors generally. If it works, we'll use it, and we're always looking for anything which will work in our business of strengthening, and hopefully improving, the institution of marriage and the family. If you are a Charlie Brown fan, as most of the world seems to be today, I'm sure you are familiar with the cartoon in which he remarks rather wistfully: "Good grief, yes! I need all the friends I can get."

As a marriage counselor, I endorse and extend that feeling to this one: "Good grief, yes! I need all the tools I can get."

One of the tools which I have found most useful to me as a marriage counselor, a knowledge and application of which I would like to share with you this

afternoon, is a personality appraisal instrument familiarly known in this Age of Acronyms in the Alphabet Society as the EPPS, which stands for the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule. It was developed by Allen L. Edwards at the University of Washington in 1954 and revised in 1957, and judging from the current literature in the psychology and counseling journals, has been widely and extensively used in all areas of the psychological measurement field since that time.

One thing contributing to its popularity among busy practitioners is that it is a quick and convenient instrument to use. The inventory consists of 225 choices of two simple statements expressing likes and dislikes or feelings, one of each of which is chosen by the person taking the test as most nearly expressing his feelings or preference. Answers are marked on a separate sheet, and can be counted by hand by simply overlaying a cut-out stencil and counting the marked blocks. The time of taking the test will vary with the speed of reading and the deliberative tendencies of the taker, from thirty to possibly ninety minutes. Checking and preparing the individual profile takes about ten or fifteen minutes, and it is simple enough that a secretary or student assistant can do the checking and profile chart preparation.

The EPPS measures fifteen relatively independent <u>normal</u> personality variables. The statements in the EPPS and the variables which they purport to measure have their origin in a list of manifest needs presented by Henry Murray and others. The names which Edwards uses for these needs are the same names assigned to them by Murray, and except for one or two, are generally already in the vocabularies of most fairly well-educated adults, which makes for more ease of understanding without detailed and lengthy explanations by the counselor.

The fifteen personality variables are needs for achievement, deference, order, exhibition, autonomy, affiliation, intraception, succorance, dominance, abasement, nurturance, change, endurance, heterosexuality, and aggression.

The need for achievement is self-explanatory, implying ambition to succeed, to do one's best, to accomplish something of great significance. The need for deference implies some dependence, a need to be a follower rather than a leader, and some need to conform. The need for order includes more than physical neatness or tidiness, a need for organization and system in all areas of one's life.

The need for exhibitionism has an unsavory connotation upon first exposure, as the word somehow seems to be connected to indecent exposure. This generally needs a little more explanation than the first three, reassurance that in the way it is used here implies only the need to be the center of things, or to have high visibility, to use some of the current professional jargon. The need for autonomy can best be defined as the need for independence, a "don't fence me in" or "live and let live" attitude, but with some rebellion and non-conformity implied, too. The need for affiliation is one of the needs for people, for friends, for gregarious association.

Intraception is a new word to most people. I define it as a need to know, to understand, a concern for understanding "why" as well as knowing "what," curiosity, even including a need for empathizing, for feeling with others. The need for succorance is another one of the social needs, or needs for other people, in this case a need for others to be affectionate, kind, attentive. This need has a complementary and yet opposite in nurturance, which is the need to give or to be all that the need for succorance is to receive or have.

The need for dominance is another of the self-explanatory ones, and need not have only the negative connotation of domineering or bossiness, but also the positive side of leadership. In fact, as you can readily see, these needs in themselves are rather neutral as far as social desirability goes, and can have both unfavorable and

favorable connotations. In developing the descriptive statements used in the items, Edwards was careful to keep this neutrality, to minimize the influence of social desirability, and an inspection of individual items shows a rather admirable success in this task.

The need for change infers a need for variety as proposed to routine; the need for endurance implies both being stubborn, which you and mules are, and persistent, which is what I am. The need for heterosexuality can be a somewhat threatening variable, evoking as it does latent fears of homosexuality or of frigidity or impotence, but is more acceptable as measuring "sexiness" as we generally view it. The need for abasement is one not often considered; it implies on the positive side, the idea of having a conscience, and on the negative, timidity and the enjoyment of martyrdom.

Of the fifteen variables, or personality needs, as measured by the EPPS, the one having the least social desirability might be aggression, as most of the items seem to consider aggression as evidence of hostility rather than as evidence of initiative as it is sometimes considered.

In interpreting the EPPS results, I am always very careful to remind the counselee or client that there really are no "good and bad" of either high or low scores, that whether we value or don't value a particular high or low evidence of need is the only valid criterion. The question is not "Is this good?" or "Is this bad?" or "Is this a better personality than this one?" The only consideration is "These are evidences of needs as measured by preferences or feelings. How these needs are met or not met determine differences of personality traits or characteristics. Whether or not we like or dislike a particular trait is a matter of individual taste."

In making a test interpretation, I explain each variable in both its socially desirable and socially undesirable context. For instance, a high need for achievement might indicate, on the one hand, commendable ambition, and on the other,

ruthless competitiveness. The need itself is neutral; how the individual seeks and has sought all of his life to satisfy that need is what has shaped his personality and made him the unique person he is.

Thus a low need for achievement could indicate healthily a non-striving, contented personality or unhealthily a lazy bum. A high need for deference could typify the dependent, Mr. Milquetoast, conformist, or the good follower. A high need for order could be rigidity or efficiency, a low need either creative flexibility or messy confusion. A high need for exhibition could make one be the life of the party, or a silly show-off; a low exhibition need could make one quiet good company or a painfully shy wallflower.

One of the ways this "healthy-unhealthy," "good-bad," "desirable-undesirable" balance of each high or low need can be shown is to imagine a kind of see-saw balance across the top of each bar of the graphed profile, on one side what might be called an "undesirable" example of personality, on the other the generally "socially acceptable" kind which one would wish to be.

In discussing the test results and the individual profiles, we consider both extremes of each high and each low variable. I generally explain the idea by illustrating with the first three or four and then involve the counselee by asking him or her to consider each of the others and explain them to me. I usually get some rather picturesque illustrations, which I enjoy. I think people in general, and especially college students, are much more creative than they are usually given credit for, and I for one like to encourage creativity and original thinking, and I am sure you'll agree that now of all times the world needs all the humor it can get!

So we have a picture of a high affiliation need producing the happy, friendly, popular person and also the compulsive "joiner." We have a high intraception need producing both the psychologist or counselor who looks at his clients as an

entomologist views bugs on a pin through a microscope, and the humanistically oriented counselor who <u>feels with</u> his client.

A high succorance need can be seen in the loving affectionate person as well as in the spoiled-baby type. A high nurturance need can produce the best of the mother-father-nurse role, as well as the worst of the "smother-love" types.

Personality analysis, as we all know, is fraught with all kinds of difficulties. I stress to takers of the EPPS that here is the picture of themselves, of their needs, according to what they said they preferred, the things and actions which they liked or disliked, and the way they felt. When asked if the general profile seems to be a valid representation of the way he sees himself, I'd say 99 our of 100 say "yes, it is," and the more unsophisticated ones are amazed that it should be so.

I think it is necessary at this or some point to warn the client that it is very easy to rationalize that all of <u>our</u> manifest needs we fulfill in ways which make us out "the good guy." For instance, that a low need for abasement in my makeup indicates a healthy security and belief in myself and others' goodness, whereas in someone else it indicates a cold lack of conscience.

I remember a long time ago in graduate school a good friend and I were discussing our profiles, and seeing my low need for abasement, he remarked: "Look at that! Shows you aren't at all sorry when you've done wrong!" My defensive answer was: "That's not true at all--it just shows I don't ever do any wrong, so how could I be sorry!"

The point I try to make is that only the individual really knows the true meaning of any score, and that generally it is probably a <u>mixed</u> bag.

Now after the individual knows himself a little better, how can EPPS results he used to look at oneself and one's fiancé or spouse in the context of the interpersonal relationship?

Pre-marital counseling is by its very nature a more optimistic and joyous task than marriage counseling, one reason for this being that it is preventive action, rather than remedial action. Love may be blind, but looking through rose colored glasses, one has to admit, does brighten up this oftentimes gray old world. And of course it is easier and less threatening to look at two conflicting needs and try to figure out ways to reconcile them, than it is to say "Probably some of your conflict lies in these two conflicting needs" after the conflict has already caused the marital discord and unhappiness that brought the bitter couple to the marriage counselor's office.

Let's look at a couple of profiles to see if we can spot some possible trouble areas. Individual personality is such a unique and many-faceted thing that there can be no absolute rule-of-thumb, and the value of the EPPS, as in any psychological measuring instrument, lies more in counseling than in measurement.

Here is a young couple, college juniors, very much in love and considering getting married this year. One of their major problems will be money. Both sets of parents are against the marriage, citing youth and unfinished education as their objections. The young couple can expect no financial assistance, or very little, from either set of parents, so their tentative plans are for the girl to drop out of college to work and to support both of them while the young husband continues in school.

EPPS results indicate a very high need for achievement in both persons. We talk about this, and both agree that it would seem to be accurate, very much in keeping with their own self-knowledge and knowledge of each other. The question then, which they might both consider carefully, could be: How might dropping out of school and taking a job affect the fulfilling of this need of the young wife? Could her own need to be successful, to accomplish something of

great significance, to be a recognized authority, be transferred to her husband's achievement? If so, how about him? Might this increase the pressure and the resulting tension to an unbearable degree?

Of course, no one knows the answer to these questions, not even the young couple. But to realistically consider them, to know that these problems might very well arise in this particular case, is the idea.

In the EPPS, as in any appraisal instrument, significance cannot be attached to any one factor in isolation. Rather it is the constellation of many factors, the emerging pattern, which must be considered.

In addition to the extremely high need for achievement, the young girl in the above illustration had also a high need for change, and a low nurturance need. Could this need for change cause her to chafe under the rather dull and routine job which she would of necessity have to take at this stage of experience and education? Would the low nurturance need affect her feelings of being the family bread-winner?

Again, there is no crystal ball to look into to see the future, but "to be forewarned is to be forearmed," as the saying goes, and to be aware of potential areas of conflict may be to forestall them altogether by preventive strategies.

Generally there are not high-low complementarity of needs as indicated on the EPPS. For instance, if the young girl had had a low achievement need, would it have worked out better for them in this case? Not necessarily at all, if her feelings had been along this line: not driven by ambition herself, she might not be able to understand her husband's very urgent desire to complete college and even go on to graduate school, and as such not willing herself to work for years to further his unfathomable (to her) ambitions.

Complementarity of need is probably best illustrated by the needs for dominance and deference. It is rather obvious that two high needs for dominance almost inevitably conflict at some point. My own suggestions for forestalling conflict in a case like this is a clear division of responsibility in decision-making areas, worked out and clearly defined before marriage and before any problems arise. High dominance-low deference and low dominance-high deference makes for a very workable complementarity of needs.

In the need for change, though, the exact opposite would hold true, with no high-low complementarity. In this case, a high-low indication is an almost sure prediction of conflict. A young man with a high need for change will probably be the type who wouldn't mind at all a job change that would entail a move across the country and a complete change in life-style; a wife with a low need for change would probably prefer to live her life out in the town she was born in, and react with tears and frustration to frequent changes in life and routine living.

This need for change can really be a most significant factor in marital success. I know from my own personal experience how I could have suffered if my own high need for change had not been shared by my husband; we simply would not have traveled and lived around the world as much as we have been able to. We have friends, a couple who are also teachers, now on the verge of divorce after 26 years of rather unsatisfying marriage to each other. The husband has always wanted to teach overseas; he's especially interested in the underdeveloped countries of Africa and spent one summer there, alone, on an educational project. She hates travel, new experiences frighten and upset her; she likes the security of living in the same house, teaching in the same school. This need for change area is one in which it seems to be most difficult to effect a workable compromise satisfactory to both persons in the closeness of the marital relationship.

In looking for patterns, one often sees a similarity of highs or lows in the three factors relating to a general need for people: affiliation, succorance, and nurturance. One can easily imagine what results when one spouse has a very low need indication on these three, and the other has a very high need pattern in this area. I have noted this often in couples who come to me with the complaints and accusations going something like this:

"He doesn't like to go with me to visit friends, and he hates my large, close-knit family always dropping over to visit us. He is not at all affectionate with the children, nor demonstrative in his attitude toward me. He never sympathizes with me in my personal problems, and never seems to want to confide in me or anybody about his, if he has any!"

"She's never happy unless she's got a big crowd of people, all her friends and relatives, around our house, or she's trying to drag me over to some of theirs. She acts so babyish when she has the slightest illness, and tries to baby me and the children. She doesn't have any hobbies or interests which she can do quietly alone, and she belongs to about fifteen clubs and circles!"

Sometimes just pin-pointing the differences in these basic personality needs makes for increased understanding and tolerance. Followed by discussions of actual ways of meeting each other's need for, or lack of need for, people, this tolerance can be broadened and some workable compromise attained. But how much easier and happier to anticipate and plan for these differences, than to try to repair damages they have already caused in the marital relationship!

I have been using the EPPS and other personality appraisal tests and inventories for some years now, in general counseling with college students, in Marriage and Family sociology classes, and in the private practice of marriage counseling. I have collected a good bit of related and unrelated data during this time, and while I have not yet completed any formal analysis of this data, I have noted with interest a recurring personality profile pattern which I have come to

call the "Spoiled Brat Syndrome." Supplemented by interview observations, the reaction of others to this personality type is definitely characterized by other's definition or classification of him or her as "the typical spoiled brat."

For instance, I might casually mention a certain student to another professor who has had him also in class: "A spoiled brat if there ever was one!" Or discuss a case with the Dean of Students: "The trouble with Mary is she's spoiled rotten!" Or have a parent consult me about a son or daughter currently causing all kinds of worry and distress. "I'm afraid his mother made a spoiled child of that boy!" Or have one spouse accuse the other of behavior "more becoming a spoiled brat than a grown-up, responsible, wife (or husband)!"

And on checking the EPPS profiles of these persons, I do notice a similar pattern. The Spoiled Brat Syndrome seems to be consistently high needs of exhibition, succorance, aggression, and sometimes dominance, and low needs in deference, nurturance, affiliation, and sometimes order and endurance.

Even though I have no formal or statistical evidence as yet, I have come to think of this syndrome as characterizing a poor marital risk, and would like to someday do a long range research study to see if it might have some predictive value of marital failure or success. To simply tabulate the "Spoiled Brat Syndrome" profiles with later marriages which end in divorce would be easy, but the keeping up with the subjects in the study would be the difficult part, as would the determining and keeping track of a control group. Anyway, as all researchers think of their own areas of interest, it would seem to be a "fertile field for inquiry."

Thank you for your interest and attention, and if I have been able to introduce you to another marriage counseling tool-of-the-trade, I'm very happy to have had this opportunity to share it. There are copies here of the EPPS for you to examine if you wish, and the address of The Psychological Corporation, the publisher, for those of you who might like to order an examination packet.